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SONNETS ON MUSIC

AND OTHER POEMS

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SONNETS ON MUSIC
AND OTHER POEMS

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AND OTHER POEMS

BY

EVELEEN M. HENDERSON

LONDON

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To

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SONNETS ON MUSIC

& OTHER POEMS.

I.

Significant Silence.

MY violin in orchestra I play,
And as I help to swell the glorious strain,
The music so inspires my striving brain,
That intricacies bring me no dismay.
But bars of rest upon my spirit weigh,
For easier 'tis to do than to refrain,
And of the measured silence I complain,
While passive, yet alert, my hand I stay.

Life's silences when we, unwilling, rest,
Are difficult! Yet could we understand
By our inaction, music is expressed
In the world symphony, divinely planned.
There's meaning in our quietude; each soul
Bears but a part in the harmonious whole.

II.

Harmonics.

ONE note alone, produced by deep-toned string,
Is all the careless multitude can hear,
But overtones, distinct to finer ear
At every note ascending gently ring.
Thus many a Life, which seems a lowly thing,
Contains the music of a higher sphere;
Too delicate for Earth, to angels clear,
Who pause and listen with a folded wing.

The world no possibilities extols,
Achievement praising and the effort crowned.
Harmonics, which vibrate in human souls
By blare of noisy deeds, alas, are drowned !
Yet, high faint notes, ye do not sound in vain
Though men be deaf, for you God's ear attain.

III.

Instrumental Music.

SORROW and Happiness have long outgrown
The little scope of words which useless are.
Our deepest thoughts are from our lips afar,
And inarticulate are joy and moan.
Thus Music needs no language but her own
(For speech expression all too oft doth mar),
And she our fast-locked hearts can best unbar
With wordless strains, most eloquent alone.

When Music's brightest diadem is hers,
No sister art draws nigh to share that crown;
So charms she most her truest worshippers,
Who, faithful, at her lonely shrine bow down.
A meed of comfort doth she bring to each,
For she can give to voiceless yearning speech.

IV.
Bach.

OH, grand Sebastian, who yet wore the chains
Of strictest rule and moved in fetters tied,
Thy genius universal is and wide.
A noble rhythm pulses in thy strains ;
Thy melodies, when heard in holy fanes
Austerely sweet, seem music sanctified.
In mazy fugues the intellect takes pride,
While gaiety thy minuet attains.

Our modern masters, who let genius free
To soar untrammelled, though they gain, perchance,
The ear with marvels of sonority,
And themes descriptive may their art enhance,
Have not thy power, musician sane and great,
The heart to purify and elevate.

V.

After the Violin Concerto.

HE who enchanted us with magic string,
Whose music stirred the secret fount of
tears,

Before us stands, rememb'ring toilsome years
When soaring genius fluttered on clipped wing.
Now, ardent worshippers acclaim him King
And echoing plaudits storm his grateful ears,
But to the orchestra, as to his peers
He turns and bows, *their* praise acknowledging.

Subservient to him, missing high success
All soloists these artist brothers are.
From envy free, and from all bitterness
They hail him gladly as their risen star.
His recognition of their homage true
Hath touched me more than all his art could do!

VI.

The Pianoforte Recital.

OH, ye who sit in ranks in concert hall,
With eyes expectant fixed on Broadwood
grand,

The score and pencil ready in your hand,
Awaiting sounds which shall your souls enthrall !
When low the artist bows before you all,
Oh ! have you thought or can you understand
What powers beyond the human you demand,
How unsupported he must stand or fall ?

The actor has the prompter in his box,
The preacher has his notes, if he is wise ;
The pianist, while shaking back his locks
Alone upon his memory relies.
No rock more lonely in encircling sea
Than midst the cultured critics then is he !

VII.

Passing Notes.

*(Passing notes lie between notes essential to the harmony,
but do not form part of a chord.)*

BUILT up of single notes by master-mind
The stately chords which on the score we see
Are towers of sound, whose harmonies agree
In making music for delight designed.
Not concords only; discords are combined
To be resolved as music's laws decree.
What lonely notes are these, which roving free
And unattached amid their ranks we find?

Poor 'passing notes' are they which humbly roam,
Connecting chord with chord yet part of none.
Akin to human hearts without a home,
Though indispensable to work well done,
For Life and Music would less smoothly flow
Without the 'passing notes' which lonely go.

VIII.

Bells.

WE clasp a violin ; our fingers press
With love the piano-keys ; our mortal breath
The sound from silver flute awakeneth,
And intimacy makes melodiousness.
But Bells we hang near Heaven, above the stress
Of Life ; above the green-clad Sleep of Death,
And this the message their sweet music saith,
That none who hearken shall be comfortless.

If I might choose the moment when to merge
In vast Eternity my measured time,
It should not be to sound of knell or dirge
Or doleful tolling, but when joyous chime
Is shaken from the tower upon the night
To speed my spirit on its lonely flight.

Reflected Light.

WHENE'ER I see thee, Moon, on August
eves

Most wonderful, in cloudless Heaven shine,
While sunset's glow still lingers on the sheaves,

And golden Earth and silver Sky combine
To keep the sable veil of Night away,
The while I praise thee for thy beams divine,

I know thou canst not generate a ray.
For thou, poor ball, art lifeless, void of light,
And dost reflect thy lord, the Sun's display,

Whence all thy radiance which enchants my sight.
And thus, oh Moon, are we akin, alas!
For though, full oft, the world accounts me bright,

My mind, responsive, like a looking-glass
But flashes back the fires which others burn,
Then darkens into dulness when they pass.

In Memoriam : J. J. T.

I THINK if I this beauteous earth were leaving,
And those who hold me dear,
That I should pass the days in silent grieving
For all things here,

And, with the Shadow of the Valley o'er me,
My eyes, abstracted, bend
On those mysterious gates that lay before me
Where journeys end.

But when we watched you passing, Friend, our
sadness
From you we hid away,
Because you loved to hear about the gladness
Of every day.

IN MEMORIAM : J. J. T.

Though steadfast and serene you faced To-morrow,
The great approaching Change,
Your human heart from others' joy and sorrow
Could not estrange.

The shades of Death were on the watchers falling,
The weary vigil through ;
But Heav'n, the future glory here forestalling,
Shed light on you !

A Respite.

I LAID me down at night,
Wounded sore with sorrow,
And the angel, Sleep,
Gave oblivion deep,
Till the dawn of morrow.

Till the birds awoke
And began their trilling
And the morning bright
Came with its delight,
All my senses filling.

For a moment, I
Felt accustomed gladness ;
For one instant gay,
Welcomed the new day
Innocent of sadness.

A RESPITE.

But remembrance came
With my full awaking,
And the sword of Pain
Pierced my heart again
To a deeper aching.

Mother-Love.

PROTECTINGLY the wings of Mother-love
The little ones enfold ;
Enclose the helpless ones, around, above,
And shelter them from cold.

These are the watchful Mother's happiest days,
For children, older grown,
In youth's self-confidence will tread the ways
That lead through Life, alone.

Ah ! sad is she when these wide wings are furled !
But constant doth remain,
And should her child seek refuge from the world,
They open wide again !

My Foes.

MY Foes are Thoughts which may not dwell
Within my mind's fair citadel.

These enemies I keep at bay
And guard against them all the day.
But when at night I seek repose
And wearily my eyelids close,
Then, winging hither 'neath the stars
The traitor dreams undo the bars.
What bold assailant rushes through?
The dear, forbidden Thought of you!

Triolet.

A WOMAN'S mind is borne on wings
Above the rocky path of reason.
A man must know the 'why' of things.
A woman's mind is borne on wings,
And if I say she often brings
Wise counsel, who shall count it treason?
A woman's mind is borne on wings
Above the rocky path of reason.

Triolet.

COLD is the nest I made for Joy,
Vain my devices for her capture,
Delights I dreamt could never cloy!
Cold is the nest I made for Joy.
I could not guess the nymph so coy,
So chary of her gift of rapture.
Cold is the nest I made for Joy,
Vain my devices for her capture.

Dainty Dress.

LET no rebukes the girl distress,
For fair array.
The Earth, in May,
Goes rioting in loveliness
And buds are gay.
So chide her not 'for dainty dress.

And I, who walk in dusty ways,
In sordid mart
So tired at heart,
Will blame her not, but rather praise
The guileless art
Which cheers the weary working days.

And keeps the lamp of beauty bright,
And doth reveal
A fair ideal,
Which else were dim to toilers' sight,
Remote, unreal,
A wavering, uncertain light.

DAINTY DRESS.

Delight then in the girl's array,
Nor vex her ear
With chidings drear.
We blame not blossoms for display,
Her Spring is here;
Her life is in its month of May!

With God Asleep.

O GENTLE Mother ! do not weep
The little one with God asleep.
For though one darling face you miss
From those up-turned towards your kiss,
Take comfort. When your flock hath flown,
To womanhood and manhood grown,
For ever as a Child you keep,
The little one with God asleep !

A Ghost.

BELOVÈD Child of mine,
Deep in thy darling eyes
A mute appeal there lies.
Not thine, alas, not thine !

Thy glance, up-raised in trust,
In confidence, in love,
To me, who bend above,
Is like a rapier thrust

To pierce the armour through
Time girds about my heart.
Avenger that thou art,
O glance from eyes of blue !

For often I made weep,
Child, in the days now flown,
Eyes like unto thine own
Closed now in Death's long sleep.

A GHOST.

As over thee I yearn
In penitence and tears,
From out the vanished years,
I see a ghost return.

Revelation.

BELOVED sights and sounds of Earth,
Which live and die and have new birth,
So dear are you to me, I pray
That you may never pass away !
A jewel city, paved with gold,
Doth leave my heart untouched and cold,
For lovelier than the sapphire's hue,
Is bloom of Earth's far mountains blue.

No emerald was ever seen
To match the marvel of the green
And gleaming mantle, which the Spring
Doth o'er the woods and meadows fling.
I pray that I may breathe again
The scent of furrows after rain,
That incense which the earth up-yields
In gratitude for watered fields.

REVELATION.

Oh! must the living ocean pass
And harden to a Sea of Glass?
That wide expanse where breezes range,
In endless motion, endless change!
Oh! cease not, sound most musical
Of billows foaming to their fall.

I cannot picture Heav'n more blest
Than this poor planet at its best,
Where, evanescent bliss made fast,
Our purest human joy should last,
And we for ever should remain
On heights reached here, but lost again.

And since the Future ne'er is shown,
May I be free to dream my own.
For well I know whate'er befall
That God's own Heav'n will please us all.

The Nurse.

‘**F**RRIEND, so kind and wise,
Watching by my bed,
Let me hide my eyes
On thy breast,’ she said.

‘For I dread to see
Cruel Death draw near.
Gathered close to thee
I shall feel no fear.’

Then she pressed her face
’Gainst the sheltering arm,
In that fond embrace
Felt secure from harm.

Tired, yet most content,
Safe as bird in nest,
Trustingly she leant
On that gentle breast.

THE NURSE.

Never did she quail,
Falling there asleep,
Closing eyelids pale
In a slumber deep.

Ceasing to draw breath,
Never knew, nor guessed
That the Angel, Death,
Cradled her to rest.

To a Sign-post.

O FRIENDLY Sign-post! Faithful guide,
Up-rising where the roads divide,
The long year through you patient stand
With outstretched arm and pointing hand.

You fail us not. Whene'er we pass
We find you on your plot of grass,
Directing us across the down
To hamlet, hostelry, or town.

I would that Life had signs like you,
For heedlessly we journey through,
Unable oft, with careless eyes,
A turning-point to recognise.

No kindly sign-post stands as guide
To warn us: 'Here the paths divide.'
We wander on, and cannot guess
We've missed the way to Happiness.

Love.

WHEN Love first came,
A gift from Heaven
To mortals given,
So pure its flame
'Twas too divine
To bear a part
In human heart
And there to shine,
So took a stain,
A smirch of earth,
And had new birth
And thus doth reign.

Two Harvests.

HERE, in the South, all the cornfields are
yellow

And heavy the foliage of trees tall and stately.
The fruit in the garden is luscious and mellow,
And reedy the river that floweth sedately.
Lifeless the air, and my spirit is sighing
Here in the South,
For the salt northern breeze and the wild sea-birds
flying.

Here, with machinery corn we are felling;
There, by the sea-loch, where blooms the bog-
myrtle,
Bairns from the school, when released from their
spelling,
Mothers and lassies in kerchief and kirtle,
All help their men-folk and Love guides the sickle
There in the North,
Where grain ripens late and the sunshine is fickle.

TWO HARVESTS.

Poor Highland harvest, where industry snatches
Scant little thefts from the peat and the heather,
Oat-fields unfenced, most pathetic of patches
Battered unkindly by wind and by weather,
Ne'er can you vie with the corn we are reaping,
Here in the South,
Yet how the thought of you sets my heart leaping !

Youth's sunny Hill we once
did Climb.

YOUTH'S sunny hill we once did climb
And gained the level of our prime :
Now hand-in-hand must we descend
The gentle slope towards the End.

No sorrow would we feel, or fear
As we the Threshold dark draw near,
Might we together o'er it pass.
But one must cross it first—alas !

The Lake and the Sky.

THE downy fleeces pastured high,
That silent roam
The heaven's dome,
Across the lake's calm bosom fly.
The sun sends down a thousand elves,
There, sparkling, to disport themselves.

When sunset splendours herald night,
The golden West
Upon its breast
Gleams magical for our delight;
Cloud-palaces, out-vying snow,
We see within the lake below.

It holds an ebon, sedge-framed glass,
To show the face
That silvers space,
When high above the Moon doth pass ;
Wherein her beauty she beholds,
Chaste Shepherdess of starry folds !

THE LAKE AND THE SKY.

And aye responding to the sky,
The lake must share
The darkness there,
And like a sheet unwritten lie,
Which stretches wide, from bank to bank,
A dull and unilluminated blank.

So I can but reflect your mood !
With you I smile
Or sigh, the while
Whate'er you do it seemeth good.
If you should ask how this can be,
It is that you are Heav'n to me !

Feminine Tactics.

A SAILING yacht, on Summer seas
Her snowy canvas gleaming,
Bends, ever graceful, to the breeze,
But only yields in seeming.

The stubborn wind she'll not oppose,
The artful little rover !
But tacking patiently she goes,
Short sail and heeling over.

And though it blow against her, yet
Its force is unavailing,
She'll make the harbour (gunwale wet)
Without a hint of failing.

And so reminds me of my Dear !
For, if our wills be clashing,
No opposition need I fear
Nor angry glances flashing.

FEMININE TACTICS.

And never will my Love rebel,
She seems to yield demurely,
But, like the boat, I know full well
Her point She'll gain most surely !

Signs of Friendship.

WHEN Mary greets me, shyness holds
Twin place with kindness and doth lend
Aloofness: yet my heart enfolds
The hope that she may call me friend.

When Mary, mourning, hides not tears
But lets me see the shower descend,
I bid adieu to half my fears,
For surely she must call me friend?

But when her timid jokes creep out
And we together laughter blend,
Ah! then I know, beyond a doubt,
That Mary counts me as a friend!

A Friend's Conversation.

THEY told me long ago that you were clever ;
I saw it in your face,
And warningly they said that I should never
With you keep pace.

But soon I knew that false was their foretelling,
And needless all my fear,
Because I did not find you lonely dwelling
In some high sphere.

Ah, no ! You came so graciously to meet me,
Upon our common earth,
And did not seek with learning to defeat me,
Or prove my dearth.

For as you spake, you simply brought a shining
Of light to every day,
The humblest things ennobling and refining,
That near us lay.

Cupid Unrecognised.

A ROSY, dimpled boy was he !
I thought him but a human child,
Who often climbed upon my knee
And looked an angel when he smiled,
So innocent he was and artless,
Without his little bow and dart-less !

If days now past I could recall,
I would not take him to my heart,
For he was not a child at all,
And sorely has he made me smart.
Yet all the time we played together
Of wings he never showed a feather !

Comprendre, c'est pardonner.

MY friend ! I judged you hardly, and you went
Away, unpardoned, to the silent land.
It was because I did not understand ;
Now, knowing all, I bitterly repent.

My comfort is that my excuse you know,
And read my heart in the clear light of Heaven.
My hope is now that I have been forgiven.
O ! for one word from you to tell me so !

Fame.

LONG weary years I sang,
But none would heed my art,
And not an echo rang
Save in your faithful heart.

The laurel on my brow
Inspireth not my pen ;
Though Fame has crowned me now,
You called me Poet then.

I'll take my tardy wreath
And lay it on the grass,
Where pulseless underneath
Your heart lies cold, alas !

My Resting Place.

WHEN I am dead,
Put up no stone, no cold hard stone
Above my head.
Let flowers, by loving hands alone
Be there outspread.

Write not my name
On marble slab or carved urn.
Let this poor frame
Unchronicled to dust return
From whence it came.

My place of rest
Shall pass unmarked by strangers' eyes,
A grassy crest.
I care not, if my mem'ry lies
Within thy breast!

A Memento.

FROM out the sea, in colour opaline,
More fair than any jewel springs an isle,
Where blooms a deeper purple on the vine
And silv'ry mists fill many a deep defile.
Around the sunny coasts the waves beguile
The little bays and jutting capes with foam,
'Tis Naxos, Ariadne's island home.

Belov'd of Bacchus, happy is her fate,
Yet deems she humbler lot of better worth.
'Twixt god and woman is a gulf too great!
Though his divinity is linked to earth
By mortal mother dying at his birth.
And often Ariadne silent grieves
When twining on his brow the ivy leaves.

She loves him too, and knows that she is blest,
But constantly she sits upon the shore,
With eyes strained seaward in a useless quest

A MEMENTO.

For Theseus' sail which will appear no more.
Until at last the tear-drops brimming o'er—
They blot the distance from her steadfast gaze,
And sea and sky are merged in mournful haze.

O! russet sails, which fill with morning breeze!
O! silver sails, which slant across the West!
You charm not Ariadne fair, for these
Are not the colours she esteemeth best.
The sail to kindle hope within her breast
Must be as sable, as the raven's wing,
A melancholy and unlovely thing.

It cometh not; it never will return,
Nor bring again the youth it bore to Crete.
So beautiful was he, her soul did yearn
To save him from his doom, and Love was sweet.
What lies upon her bosom? Feels the beat
Of her poor heart? What secret treasure rare?
Ah! Bacchus must not guess that it is there!

A MEMENTO.

'Tis but a thread to chafe her pearly skin.
She draws it forth and greets it with a kiss,
Half furtively, as though it were a sin.
What value can there be, alas, in this?
It is a relic of remembered bliss,
A fragment of the clue which, in the Maze,
Led Theseus safely through the devious ways.

Ah me! in many a life which perfect seems
Is there a rift, through which the vanished days
Besiege the heart with dear and futile dreams;
Some poor memento on the bosom weighs,
Whilst eyes look seaward with a wistful gaze,
And other Ariadnes keep the thread
Which binds together memories best dead.

A Legend of the Corinthian Capital.

MANY the years which have flown since in
Corinth a maiden
Died in the bloom of her childhood. Her parents,
grief-laden,
Wept for their loved one, with ceaseless and pas-
sionate yearning,
Knowing, alas! that for her there could be no
returning.
(Pagan their darkness, and void of Belief in Here-
after.)
Silent the room, where so lately rang musical
laughter,
Tenantless now, yet untouched, nothing changed,
nothing altered,
Love shrinking back from the duty with purpose
that faltered.

A LEGEND.

Everything there but the child! All her toys
lying scattered

Just as she left them, frail tokens of Hopes
roughly shattered.

Poor, pretty playthings! Pathetic and valueless
treasure!

Sadly the Nurse, in the hours of her newly-found
leisure,

Gathered the toys in a basket, and quietly
weeping

Placed it, with love, on the tomb where her
darling lay sleeping,

High in the centre, where all passing by could
discern it.

Fearing lest rollicking winds might perchance
overturn it,

Nurse laid a tile on the basket, its cover re-
placing.

Homewards at length her slow footsteps in sorrow
retracing,

A LEGEND.

Bravely she turned to the tasks in the house
which were left her;

Missing the child, yet reviling not Death who
bereft her.

* * * * *

Gentle the winds with the basket of toys; but
their sighing

Wafted in dust through the wicker-work; seeds
then came flying.

Safe in the soil 'twixt the loosely-packed toys
they were nourished,

Till an acanthus plant grew to full beauty and
flourished.

Graceful the leaves which sprang out of the sides
of the basket,

Upwards in lovely profusion to clothe it and mask it,
Under the heavy square tile which kept guard
o'er the treasure

Once so beloved of the Child: her delight and
her pleasure.

A LEGEND.

Thus was it seen by an artist who passed it
admiring.

Straightway he carved it in stone ; then, his genius
inspiring,

Set it on high on a column, upholding a portal.

Faithful, fond Nurse ! Your poor tribute of love
is immortal.

The Pathway.

AS day by day
I crossed the dewy meadows green,
I made a Way,
Where, ne'er before a track was seen.

Straight, well-defined,
This path was never overgrown,
A link to bind
A friend's heart closer to mine own.

What though my feet
And not my Friend's the pathway trod?
By converse sweet
I glorified my life's dull plod.

Until a thought
My fond and faithful heart did grieve.
'Unsought, unsought
I give more love than I receive.'

THE PATHWAY.

It nought avails

To measure Love. True Love gives all
Nor holds the scales

To watch the balance rise or fall.

Alas, alas !

By vanity my steps were stayed.
Encroaching grass
Concealed the little track I made.

Now none could guess

A Path beneath the tangle green.
Weeds numberless
Have grown, oh, Friend, our hearts
between !

In the Footsteps of St. Luke.

O H ! great Physician and Evangelist
Fulfilling twofold mission unto man,
Another gift was yours, which some have missed,
For much was crowded into one life's span.
You healed disease ; work our dear Lord began,
And brought 'good news' to many a weary soul,
Thus making ever mind and body whole.

But you, oh, blessed Luke, were Painter too,
So Legend tells, and dearly loved your art.
And you portrayed (I pray the tale be true)
Christ's gentle Mother, with a rev'rent heart.
The first Madonna ! Yet how far apart
From those we praise in the Renaissance time,
For you depicted Mary's Self sublime.

While Cimabuë and his sequent train
Of Italy the glory and the pride,
Midst peasant models sought to find in vain

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ST. LUKE.

(Though maids were fair throughout the country-side)

A face like Mary's, pure and sanctified,
So matchless in its spiritual grace,
None such now make the earth their dwelling-place.

Oh, saintly Luke! Great master of the Guild!
Through all the world physicians give you hail.
What though in Learning they are deeply skilled?
Your holy influence doth still prevail,
Inspiring all who follow, without fail,
Who to their calling and themselves are true.
Painter and Healer! They are bound to you.

Though on your pathway they have onward passed,
Far, far, oh Luke, your simple lore beyond,
To fields of knowledge, wonderful and vast,
And skill, victorious, bids them ne'er despond,
Yet are they linked to you with double bond,
For treading in your footsteps half divine,
They oft, with healing, love of Art combine.

SONNETS.

The 'Backs' at Cambridge.

M^Y boat is but the cradle of my dream,
As silently 'neath bridges quaint I glide,
Whilst ancient buildings rise on either side
In solemn ranks, oft opening to the gleam
Of lawns, elm-shaded, loud with rooks. I deem
That Venice, Adriatic's pearl, hath vied
With Holland trim, forsaking briny tide
To woo thee, gentle Cam, dear English stream !

Here, by thy marge, or floating on thy wave,
Youth seems eternal, ever strong and fleet.
Thou ne'er shalt see bright faces growing grave.
But when young hearts to tamer measures beat,
Far from thy shores, thy image they enshrine,
As thou to-day, fair Cam, dost mirror mine.

A Countless Band.

(Suggested by a passage in a novel by James Payn.)

A COUNTLESS band of mournful sisters we !
In throbbing human hearts our dwelling-place.
We wound and sting, and yet it well may be
We measure out to man a meed of grace.
No heed take we of creed, or rank, or race,
For all who know us are at once akin,
And where we enter, sympathy flows in.

We differ widely: many names we own
Yet circle Earth for ever, hand-in-hand,
A chain, uniting all whom we have known
In every nation and in every land.
Dear Friend, if you our power would understand,
Search out your heart, and you will find us too,
For we are Sorrows, and have dwelt with you !

Fleeting Joys.

THINGS evanescent are supremely fair!

The wild white cherry's promise of its prime,
Fantastic wonders of the hoar-frost rime,
And darling gold of little children's hair,
Are touching in their loveliness most rare,
While Morn and Eve are dressed in hues sublime.
Whatever quickly passes, for a time
On Earth doth Heaven's brightest beauty wear.

Oh, fleeting joys, I would not bid you stay!
You are the glimpses, tempered to our sight,
Which God vouchsafes us of His perfect Day,
A foretaste here of heavenly delight.
Of Love and Tears you move the deepest spring,
Then haste away on swift and noiseless wing.

The Sundial.

I NEED no clock, with hard metallic chime,
To warn me of the quickly passing hours,
While tending with delight my cherished flowers,
For, on a lawn, set round with scented lime,
An ancient dial marks for me the time.

The Sun awakes its dumb recording powers
With warm caress, while clouds all black with
showers
Are driven from off the sky in Summer's prime.

But if the heav'n be dark, then vacant is its face,
Its graven numbers can no hour impart.

Thus to myself resemblance do I trace,
For, take away Love's sunshine from my heart,
Then, like the dial 'neath a clouded sky,
As useless and as blank a thing am I!

To B——.

O H, what about thee touches us, dear maid?
Not Youth alone, nor fairness exquisite,
Nor modesty, which wraps thy soul in white;
But Innocence, unconscious, unafraid,
Such as our Parents had when first they strayed
Through Eden's glades in wonder and delight.
Thou bringest to our weary, world-worn sight
Earth's childhood, in all loveliness arrayed.

Thou dwellest in a Paradise! About
The gate an angel guard I fain would place,
A flaming sword should keep all evil out.
Ah! what if I should ever lonely pace
Beyond the bars in longing and in doubt,
And never more behold thy gentle face?

A Warm Day in Winter.

IN darkest Winter sometimes gleams a day
Of warmth and sunshine when the skies are blue,
And Hope in every heart doth pulse anew
And January wears the smile of May.
Perchance Persephone hath stol'n away
Before her time from realms of mournful hue,
And as she roams the flowerless meadows through,
The birds find voice and all the Earth is gay.

Thus often dawns a day of happy Spring
For us in Life's mid-winter, hoar and sage,
When weariness, regret, and care take wing,
In latest volume an unwonted page,
To teach us Youth is an undying thing,
Which only sleeps within the breast of Age!

Thoughts in a Garden.

I.

TO AN APPLE:

OH, homely apple ! Autumn's kindly dower,
Were you the fruit which charmed Eve's bliss
away ?

Your quiet russet, guiltless of display
More golden, doubtless, gleamed in Eden's bower.
The World's great Mother little guessed the power
Which at your core then unsuspected lay.
The secret germ of all we know to-day
First stirred with life in her temptation hour.
To Science seems no bound or limit set,
Its ever-widening stream the earth o'erflows.
Can we, Eve's latest children, now regret
Her disobedience robbed us of repose ?
Nay, rather, all who reckon knowledge sweet
Should lay a grateful tribute at her feet !

II.

TO AN UNKNOWN FRUIT.

WHAT fruit hung ripening on the Tree of
Life?

We cannot tell, but dull perchance its hue,
As it between the leaves peeped shyly through
Or it had tempted Adam's envious wife.
Had she but plucked it, with its secrets rife
We ne'er should fret o'er problems ever new
And ever old, which vainly we pursue,
No wiser after centuries of strife.

Ne'er should we pace the old well-trodden ground
Still wondering what Life's mystery enfolds,
And what behind Death's dusky veil is found.
But God the Tree of Life from us withholds!
Beyond our reach and hidden from our eyes
Its fruit, ungathered, blooms in Paradise.

TRANSLATIONS.

The Eve of a Festival.

(From the Italian of G. Pascoli.)

OH, have you ironed, Mother dear,
The fine new shirt for me?

It hangs not on the bushes near,

Nor on the hawthorn tree.

Your hands hide both your eyes—ah, why,

When glad to-morrow draweth nigh?

Ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong!

White villages together speak,

In rosy light they sing,

And from the shade of mountain peak

The festal echoes ring.

To both your ears your hands you keep;

To-morrow comes and yet you weep!

Ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong!

THE EVE OF A FESTIVAL.

You're thinking . . . I remember now !

How long ago ? One night

When cold as snow was Baby's brow,

His face a waxen white.

And loudly then the church-bells rang*

And very near us was the clang.

Ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong !

A joyous peal they rang that night

To greet the angel new,

The little angel taking flight.

You wished him back with you ;

Within his cradle, at your breast.

You wept when bells were merriest !

Ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong !

* In Italy, when a baby dies, a joyous peal of bells is rung. The bell is not tolled as it is for an older person.

The Nest.

(From the Italian of G. Pascoli.)

BARE is the rose-bush! vanished leaves all dead!
A nest is hanging from its boughs. In Spring
What melodies and ceaseless twittering
Arose therefrom and o'er the fields outspread!

Now, trembling in the breeze, one feather, shed
In happier times, is lonely fluttering!
Thus oft, to minds austere a dream will cling,
For ever taking flight, yet never fled!

Infinity.

(From the Italian of Leopardi.)

THIS lonely hill was ever my delight,
And dear the hedge, which every here and
there

Doth hide the far horizon from my sight.
I sit, and musing, picture everywhere
Around me space, interminable, still ;
Great silences, beyond our knowledge here
And quietudes profound and wide, until
My heart is filled with wonderment and fear.
And as I hear the whisper of the breeze
Which rustles through the branches, I contrast
Its voice amongst the leafage of the trees
With that immeasurable silence vast ;
Remembering Eternity, and all
The Seasons that are past and now are dead ;
The Present is alive ! I hear it call
In sounds that murmur gently overhead.
My thought is drowning in Immensity,
But sweet is shipwreck in so great a sea !

To the Ox.

(From the Italian of Carducci.)

I LOVE thee, gentle ox ! And to my breast
A sense of peaceful strength doth penetrate.
On free and fertile fields thy glance doth rest ;
Thou hast a solemn, monumental state.
Thou bendest to the yoke with kindly zest,
And aidest man the earth to cultivate.
He urges ; goads. Thy answer is expressed
By slow-turned patient look from eyes sedate.

From damp, dark nostril doth thy breath arise ;
Like joyful hymn that lowing loud of thine
Doth die away into the air serene.
Half sweet and half austere thy dark blue eyes
Reflect the ample quietude divine
Which dwelleth in the silent pastures green.

Chants du Crépuscule, xxvii.

(From the French of Victor Hugo.)

THE flower said to the butterfly of heavenly
hue,

‘ Stay, oh stay !

‘ How different is our fate, for I remain, but you

‘ Fly away.

‘ And ne’er the less we love. Afar from men we see

‘ Happy hours.

‘ And we are like each other. People say that we

‘ Both are flowers.

‘ Alas ! air carries you away, whilst to the ground

‘ Chained am I.

‘ And fain would I your flight with my sweet
breath surround

‘ In the sky.

CHANTS DU CRÉPUSCULE, XXVII.

‘ But no, you go too far. ’Midst countless flowers
you stray,

‘ Blossoms sweet.

‘ And I am left alone to watch my shadow play

‘ At my feet.

‘ You fly, then you come back, then go again to new

‘ Distant spheres.

‘ And always, every morning I appear to you

‘ Bathed in tears.

‘ And oh ! that we at last fond faithful love may
know

‘ Full and free,

‘ Like me, take root in earth, or else, my King
bestow

‘ Wings on me ! ’

Envoi.

ROSES and butterflies, within the tomb some
day

Soon or late

We meet. Will you not live together somewhere,
say,

Wherefore wait?

Somewhere, in air above, if there your spirit soars
In its flight,

Or in the fields below if there your chalice pours
Its delight.

Colour, or breath so light, it matters not, nor where
Is your bower.

Half-blown corolla or a butterfly most fair,
Wing or flower.

To live together is the first great needed good,
Reality.

Thereafter, we might choose at random if we would
Earth or sky!

To a Flower.

(From the French of Alfred de Musset.)

DEAR Flower, what do you want with me,
You sweet and charming souvenir?
You're half coquette, half dead, I see.
Oh, say, who sent you to me here?

A journey long you just have made
Beneath this seal wrapped carefully.
What were the things you saw? What said
The hand that cut you from the tree?

Or are you, peradventure, nought
But faded plant too near its doom?
Or does your heart enclose a thought
Prepared a second time to bloom?

TO A FLOWER.

Your flower, alas! the whiteness shares
Of innocence, which wearies me,
But your green leaf the colour wears
Of timid Hope, so fair to see.

Have you some message that is meant
For me? Then speak! I am discreet.
Is there a language in your scent?
Enfolds your verdure secrets sweet?

If it is thus, then answer low.
If it is nought, then silence keep,
Mysterious messenger, and so
Upon my bosom lightly sleep.

I can too well that hand divine
Wherein caprice and grace unite
Which, with a thread both soft and fine,
Has tied your chalice pale and white.

TO A FLOWER.

Praxiteles, my little flower,
And Phidias ne'er could match that hand
In beauty, for they had not power
Venus as model to command.

'Tis softly white and fair and free,
And open too, I have been told.
To him who shall its owner be
A treasure rare can it unfold.

But it is wise, it is severe!
Some ill might come to me, it seems.
Flower, we must its displeasure fear.
Say nothing.—Leave me to my dreams!

To Sainte-Beuve.

*On a passage in an article contributed to the
'Revue des Deux Mondes.'*

(From the French of Alfred de Musset.)

THERE is in us each one (Friend, you expressed it well),

Often a certain flower, which doth depart
During our life and fades from out our heart.

'In the majority of men doth dwell

A poet, who, alas! is early dead:

The man survives him.' Friend, 'twas too well
said.

In writing down your thoughts for us you choose
Harmonious words and take but little heed

If, in Heaven's language you blaspheme indeed.

Take back the verse again, oh, injured Muse!

Remember, often in our hearts we keep

A poet, ever young, who lies asleep.

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